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“LUSITANIA” DAY: MAY 7, 1916

BY “HISTORICUS”

THIS is the first anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, a day whose recurrence will always bring with it very painful memories for all loyal Americans until a German Republic or a Constitutional Monarchy arises on the ruins of German Militarism.

The writer hoped to be able to write an article in praise of President Wilson's attitude, alike in his recent address to Congress and in his spirited dispatch to the German Government on the savagery of her submarine warfare, followed, it was hoped, with an absolute demand upon her that she should abandon “frightfulness” and cease her constant violations of all the laws alike of God and man in her frantic and foolish efforts to make herself not only the lord of all lands but also the mistress of all seas. Happily, many other Americans loyal to the bravest and best traditions of their fathers have expressed in substance the same views, giving credit to the President for his belated but very welcome stand in favor of the honor and dignity of the greatest Republic in history. Unfortunately, he did not draw the sharp distinction between the interference by Great Britain with our making more money and the killing by Germany of our innocent people, and perhaps in consequence of his failure at any time to have drawn sharply and distinctly that awful distinction, we are now sunk into a greater depth of humiliation and degradation than ever; for to his manly, moderate and clear demand that the rights of humanity should be recognized in this dreadful war, there comes back the same familiar, outworn reply, evasive when it is not false, and always insolent, yielding in very truth hardly anything except in words, and making even such light concessions dependent upon our granting the impudent demand that we should require other nations to observe what Germany

pleases to call international law,—violations of which she says interfere with the movement of commerce,—as a condition precedent to her respecting those laws when they involve the loss of the lives of thousands of innocent men, women and children who have done nothing whatever to deserve the terrible fate Germany has inflicted upon them, and continues to inflict upon them.

This reply of Germany's recalls inevitably the murder of the little school-children on the peaceful streets of Scarborough on their way to school by bombs dropped upon them by Germany in willful murder. So many like atrocities have been committed by Germany since the war began that it is not wonderful that her military and naval leaders, who are now the only authorized spokesmen of her sixty-five millions of people, should have come to regard it as their right to kill whom they choose, when they choose, and where they choose, and of whatever nationality.

It is of course very late to speak the truth, but it is never too late to do so. For over sixty years the spirit of pan-Germanism has dominated the governing classes first of Prussia and then of Germany, conferring on those classes and the navies and armies they controlled the absolute right to murder, ravish and drown all men, women and children of whatever nation and under whatever protection, if such treatment by them would by its “frightfulness” aid Germany in her mad scheme of world conquest. If the most sacred treaties stood in the way of such infernal deeds they were but “scraps of paper.” If a peaceful and happy nation stood in their path, they had the right “to hack their way through it.” From such views—and these are their words, not ours—the dullest mind could foresee that they must wage war with the help of liars, spies and criminals; and so they have done, infesting our neutral and peaceful country with many thousands of such scoundrels, engaging in all kinds of atrocities from day to day. It follows as the day the night that no nation, hoping to preserve its own respect or the respect of its loyal citizens, can hope to maintain diplomatic relations with Germany—unless she mends her ways.

While all the rest of the world has been progressing towards a larger measure of liberty and humanity, pan-Germanism has separated itself from all forward-looking nations, and, turning its back upon democracy with contempt,

has marched steadily backwards toward the dark ages of "government by the divine right of kings" and an absolute naval and military autocracy—a movement whose steps in this twentieth century after Christ can only lead Germany sooner or later to the abyss of Hell. It may take more time than was hoped; more peaceful women, more children, may be assassinated; more nuns in their holy works of love and charity may be submitted to unnamable outrages; more shrines of religion, more homes of art dedicated to the uplifting of the human spirit may be destroyed by Krupp's monster cannon: but let us never forget that

Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;

Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all,

and that out of this mad welter of barbarous murder, which the governing class in Germany persists in miscalling warfare, may emerge for Germany also the great happiness of "government of the people, by the people and for the people," and sweep away the horror now making them a demented nation, vainly trying to force upon mankind "government of a military caste, by a military caste, and for a military caste," who have only one motto—"whatever helps our swords and guns to hack our way through is right, no matter how foul or brutal it may be; for our only motto is '*Deutschland über alles.*'"

Whoever wishes to know the truth as to the extent to which German barbarity has gone need only read a very temperate and moderate article by Paul van Dyke, Professor of Modern European History in Princeton University since 1908, printed in the *New York Times' Current History of the War* for the month of May. One may become impatient at his moderation, but among other truthful statements he makes, he quotes the official doctrine of the United States and the practice of its officers with regard to hostages and retaliations fifty years ago, contrasting it with the doctrine and practice of the German Government, and of its army and navy, on the same subject today. The German practice in these matters, so opposite to our own, was actually flung into our teeth by the deliberate application of it to our own citizens after the most solemn warning to Germany that it should not apply it to them—a warning to her in the most ex-

PLICIT terms not to destroy any merchant vessel of the United States and not to cause the death of any American citizen.

On the 7th of May, 1915, under direct orders given by the naval and military authorities of Germany, one of her submarines sank the *Lusitania* with over a thousand passengers on board, drowning a large number of innocent men, women and children, among them more than a hundred Americans. We immediately contended *in words* that this act was unlawful and in violation of many sacred principles of justice and humanity. We refused to accept the miserable palliations offered by Germany for the deed, and we based our protest against it on very distinct grounds. We said we were contending for something much greater than any rights of property or privileges of commerce. The Government of the United States was contending for nothing less high and sacred than *the rights of humanity*, and it is upon this principle of humanity as well as upon the law of nations founded upon it that the United States took her stand, a stand to which Germany also had assented by her signature to the Hague Convention of 1907.

"In doing his duty as a citizen by forming his own opinion as to whether the stand taken by the Government of the Republic on the high and sacred rights of humanity was right or wrong, it is proper for every loyal American to take into account what lies behind the *Lusitania*, for this nation was confronted with a theory of the German military authorities," which the writer has placed plainly before us all in their own words and their own practices described by themselves. Precisely the same attitude which underlies the utterances and acts in time of war on the part of the German naval and military authorities, which Professor van Dyke described in German words, underlies, as he truthfully says, the famous Zabern incident which occurred shortly before the outbreak of the war. Both, he said, proceed "*from a certain abnormal caste consciousness, a certain exaltation of all military and naval persons above all civil persons, a certain deification of armed forces as the incarnation of the greatest human qualities and the highest potential of patriotism, which makes the gains of war seem like the smile of God.*"

In December, 1913, there was a serious difficulty between the garrison of the Alsatian town of Zabern and its inhabitants. In the course of this difficulty a lieutenant of the regiment in garrison wounded severely with his saber a lame

schoolmaster who had made to him what he considered an insulting remark. The lieutenant and his superior officers—for he claimed to have acted in the spirit of orders given to them in regard to their attitude toward the civil population—were court-martialed, but were acquitted by the military authorities.

The affair created an extraordinary excitement in Germany. The leading papers, with few exceptions, condemned the action of the Government which supported the military authority, but the action of the pretended representative assembly of Germany was even more significant. After speeches by General von Falkenhayn and von Bethmann-Hollweg, the Reichstag passed (293 to 54) a vote of lack of confidence, which would have brought about the fall of any responsible ministry in any constitutional Government, but of course such vote had no influence in a despotic naval and military Government such as that of Germany.

The American Republic owes it to herself, to the world, and to the German people to stand by her own principles and the principles of humanity, and to assert them without compromise against any attempt in the past or in the future on the part of the German naval and military authorities to apply to American citizens their principle of government: "That excessive humanitarian notions should not limit the only true humanity, which very often lies in a ruthless application of certain severities indispensable to war."

President Wilson himself wrote lately to Senator Stone (who impudently insisted on designating the ships on which free American citizens might sail) "that to forbid our people to exercise their rights for fear we might be called upon to vindicate them would be a deep humiliation indeed. It would be an implicit, all but explicit, acquiescence in the violation of the rights of man everywhere. It would be a deliberate abdication of our hitherto proud position as spokesman even among the turmoils of war for the law and the right."

These be brave words indeed, and they make every loyal American feel more proud of his country and its President than he had been at liberty to feel since the declaration of neutrality at the outbreak of the war and the many humiliations we have accepted at the hands of Germany in that long interval; but where do we stand today? It is fitting that Mr. Bryan should sound, as he has sounded, a loud note of

triumph over the surrender by President Wilson of these brave words, and their inevitable implications, for here we stand on the anniversary of the bloody massacre by Germany of one hundred and fifteen of our innocent men, women and children on a peaceful errand, on a peaceful ship sailing the high seas under the protection of the law of nations and of their American citizenship, and nothing really done.

It is hateful for any American to express the opinion that this acquiescence on the part of President Wilson is due to the advice, said to have been given to him by Mr. Bryan at the outbreak of the war, that he must never lose sight of the German vote, but now that the election is so near at hand that thought necessarily appears to have far greater importance than it really possesses.

It is true that there is a small body of bribed or demented Germans scattered all over our country organized into alliances and other associations, who, long before the war broke out, were engaged in converting such few Germans as were amenable to their solicitations into treason to the fundamental principles of the American Government. Those principles are contained in the Declaration of Independence, in our Constitution, and in the undying aspiration of Mr. Lincoln for government by the people. In addition to the few German traitors among us hating this doctrine and striving to destroy it, must be added a much smaller number of demented Irishmen who cherish the same traitorous hopes and who are now shown to have been in actual league with the German traitors. But outside of these two small bodies, there are the great overwhelming masses of American citizens of Irish birth or descent, or of German birth or descent, who are as loyal to American democracy as any man born and reared under our flag. They are, in this generation, the representatives of the spirit of that brave Irish brigade led by General Meagher into the heart of many battles and of those devoted German brigades who equalled the highest measure of heroism attained by any of the soldiers on either side of our Civil War. If General Meagher may be cited as an example of the loyalty and bravery of the Irish soldiers of the Republic, General Schurz may be as fitly cited as an example of the loyalty and bravery of the German troops who fought as gallantly in the same historic struggle.

Unhappily, however, politicians feel the importance only of the men nearest to them and think nothing of the great

masses of "the plain people" who stood by Mr. Lincoln all through the Civil War, and will today stand by any public man who represents to them in very truth a loyal American, no matter what may be his party name or affiliations. Unhappily, too, for the Democratic Party, it seems definitely committed to the support of a candidate who, although he has moments when he sees the clear vision of American courage and fidelity to liberty, soon sinks back into what appears to be a childish apprehension of the Irish hyphens and the German hyphens, and betrays alike the dignity and honor of a trusting people committed to his hands.

No matter from what land or from what blood a citizen comes, so that he be, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, a loyal American in the sense in which so many of our great ancestors proved themselves to be, he is welcome to our fellowship and friendship as if he or his ancestors had never lived a day beyond the protection of the Stars and Stripes. So long, however, as German militarism, with all its hateful implications, is allowed to dominate the German people, we must observe with reverence and with sorrow each recurring anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, as we do our anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, dropping this observance as soon as the German people resume their rights of self-government and again take their place in the family of civilized nations.

Meanwhile, we shall continue to hope, even against hope, that the war which German militarism is still waging with such unexampled savagery against Christian civilization and democracy will be defeated, and that liberty will again emerge victorious, with blessings for all the children of men.

Let us take to heart the prophecy of Carlyle:

Man has walked by the light of conflagrations and amidst the sound of falling cities, and now there is darkness and long watching until it be morning. The voice of the faithful can but exclaim: As yet strikes the twelfth hour of the night. Birds of darkness are on the wing, specters arise, the dead walk, the living dream. *Thou eternal Providence will cause the day to dawn.*

"HISTORICUS."